

# FINAL FANTASY XIII REMINISCENCE ~Tracer of Memories~

## Chapter 7: Fang and Vanille

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*Translation credits to Galvea@GameFAQs.*

The dry winds kick up a veil of sand; just beyond, Aoede spies the shadow of a steeple in the distance, and knows that she is approaching the ruins, her destination...

She has just been to the village, little more than a collection of cattle ranches among the rocky wilderness. The village community is small enough for every face to be familiar, and it is thanks to this that Aoede quickly tracks down the two women; the villagers tell her they are often seen in the ruins, some distance away from the village. As Aoede makes her way there, she thinks she understands why the two women have taken a liking to the place: the ruins standing among the desolate landscape reminds them of home.

Aoede enters the ruins, and finds herself in a great stone hall, where the walls are thick and sturdy, and the sound of the biting winds deceptively far away. Although the ruins have been abandoned for many years, Aoede notes that it is considerably well-preserved. The place is surprisingly clean, and might even be habitable with a few pieces of furniture. Aoede has to remind herself that the two women she is looking for don't actually live here.

Aoede takes a deep breath, and calls out:

"Is anyone here?"

Aoede's voice echoes throughout the empty hall. Before the last of the echoes fade, a voice speaks up from behind Aoede.

"Stop shouting, it makes a damned lot of noise."

Aoede is caught unawares; just a moment ago she could have sworn there was nobody there. She turns to find a tall woman with dark skin and black hair, and Aoede knows she has the right person.

Fang:

"The people down at the village gave us a heads up, said some woman was trying to sniff us out. Who told you about this place, you little weasel?"

Aoede:

“Um... Noel. Wait, to be precise, I met Snow before him, and he had this message...”

Overwhelmed by the hostility emanating from Fang, Aoede fumbles to find her words, and the resulting explanation is too cryptic to earn points in her favour.

“The hell are you talking about?”

Fang is now all the more suspicious of Aoede, and just as Aoede thinks Fang is about to throw her out –

“Did I hear that right!? Miss, you met Snow and the others!?”

A voice pipes up, full of innocence, and the tension in the air is shattered at once; Aoede finds that she has just been saved by a red-head with pigtails, peeking out from the shadows of the hall. Aoede takes this opportunity to compose herself, and this time the introduction goes well. After all the practice she’s had Aoede is getting to be an old hand at telling her story, and even Fang is persuaded.

Fang and Vanille begin to tell their story; eventually they arrive at the point where they save Cocoon by turning into crystals.

Fang:  
“We turned into crystals and went to sleep, but we were able to watch the people go about their lives on Gran Pulse.”

Aoede:  
“Now that you mention it, Serah told me that in the middle of her travels through time, the both of you saved her.”

Vanille:  
“Oh yes, I remember that. She asked for help in the world of dreams. I’ve always felt that Serah and I share a connection, somehow. I mean, when we first opened our eyes in Cocoon, Serah was the first person we met.”

Fang:  
“Yeah, it was our fault Serah became a l’Cie. We wanted to save her, make it up to her. If we could have fought by her side, maybe things would have ended differently, and Serah wouldn’t have died.”

Aoede:  
“But at that time the both of you were the pillar holding up Cocoon, and there was nothing you could do... After that, how did the two of you escape when the world was taken over by the Chaos?”

Vanille:  
“Hope saved us. Right before Cocoon fell apart, they cut us out of the pillar and sheltered us. You know, that organization Hope created – um, what’s it called again?”

Aoede:  
“Conseil de Renaissance. And after that the two of you continued to sleep.”

Vanille:  
“That’s right, we slept for 500 years. We woke up 13 years before the end of the world. I wanted very much to thank Hope for saving us, but...”

Fang:  
“By that time 150 years had already passed since Hope was kidnapped by God. The Conseil de Renaissance had been defunct for years, and the Order of Salvation were the ones running things. Can you imagine what a shock that was? We finally woke up, and what did we find? The world in shambles, people throwing themselves at the feet of a strange god. I thought, what the hell is going on here?”

Vanille:

“But it had to happen, sooner or later. We were fine because we were asleep, but everyone else had already lived through 500 years of a dying world... you can’t fault them for wanting to depend on something, they were so tired, inside. And that got me thinking. If the teachings of the Order are a lifeline for the people, well, maybe I should help them out, too.”

Aoede:

“I heard that during those years, you, Vanille, were “the Saint of the Order of Salvation”. I suppose that, like a saint, you wanted to help as many people as possible when you cooperated with them.”

Vanille:

“...Yes, but as it turned out I wasn’t working with them at all. I was being used.”

Aoede:

“Used?”

Fang:

“The Order exploited Vanille’s feelings. They welcomed Vanille into the Cathedral, fed her pretty lies, things she wanted to hear. She’s the type to take everything seriously, and she believed everything they told her, never suspecting anything. She took it into her head that she could help everyone so long as she did whatever the Order wanted.”

Vanille:

“...That’s always been one of my faults. You know how it is, you keep thinking you have to fix your weaknesses, but in the end you can’t ever change. My feelings were caught in a dead end, so before I knew what I was doing, I’d bought into the Order’s – no, God’s plans.”

Aoede:

“God... you’re talking about the Glorious God, Bhunivelze. Snow said that Bhunivelze was also the one behind your awakenings from the crystal. Is that true?”

Fang:

“Who knows? Seems the most plausible explanation, but for all we know Lumina could have been the one behind it.”

Aoede:

“Lumina... the girl who appeared when the two of you woke up. The first child to appear in 500 years, in a world where children are no longer born – put this way, you can’t help thinking of her as some kind of Holy Child of God.”

Fang:

“Holy my ass, she was a s\*\*\*ty little brat, like Chaos personified. But for whatever reason she was really attached to Vanille.”

Vanille:

“Lumina may have acted like a spiteful prankster, but really, she was a lonely girl who wanted attention. Maybe she woke us up because she wanted someone to indulge her.”

Fang:

“All the same, Lumina could have been working under Bhunivelze’s orders, too. In any case, when Light and I were looking for the “Holy Clavis”, Lumina sabotaged the search.”

Aoede:

“You took off for the desert right after waking up from the crystal?”

Fang:

“No, I spent a few years with Vanille, under the Order’s care. We lived in Luxerion, where the Cathedral was. In a

way, those were the easiest days of our lives, after all we'd been through. Our lives in Oerba, on Gran Pulse where we were born and raised, those days were just one hardship after another, and when we became l'Cie, charged with taking down Cocoon, well, "a hard life" doesn't even begin to cover it. So you see why I thought taking it nice and easy in Luxerion wasn't such a bad idea. And there were a number of decent men and women among the followers of the Order."

Vanille:

"They treated us very well."

Fang:

"That they did, but even if the underlings were regular good guys, the ones at the top of the Order were rotten garbage. I realized that if things went according to their plans, Vanille would be in danger, so I left Luxerion. I wanted to take Vanille with me, but you could have taken a lever to her and she still wouldn't budge."

Vanille:

"At the time, I thought it was best to stay with the Order. I can be really stubborn sometimes, over the strangest things, even though I'm just a push-over the rest of the time."

Fang:

"When were you ever a push-over? Anyway, in the end I left Luxerion, alone, and headed for the desert. I was planning on looking for the Holy Clavis, all by myself, but then I bumped into these bandits, bunch of tomb raiders. So I decided to throw in with them and comb the ruins together."

Vanille:

"She makes it sound like a partnership, but really, I heard she beat them into submission. The bandit gang, Monoculus, they tried to mess with her, so she gave them a good thrashing, and that made her their boss."

Fang:

"Is that what it looked like? Well, anyway, it's true we had a little "talk", and next thing I knew the bandits were groveling on their knees, begging "Please be our Boss!" Didn't see a reason to refuse, so I became the leader of Monoculus."

Aoede:

"And then you led the bandits on a search for the Holy Clavis. How did the excavations go?"

Fang:

"Badly. The ruins were sealed, and we couldn't get close to the crucial areas. Light was the one who cleared the way."

Vanille:

"Lightning came back to us after Fang had been gone 4, 5 years, I think."

Fang:

"That's right. Without her powers of "the Saviour", we'd never have broken that seal on the Holy Clavis."

Aoede:

"What kind of powers did the Holy Clavis have?"

Vanille:

"The power to summon the souls of the dead, and to purify them. You'd think, with a description like that, that it would be something sacred, but the Order had a terrifying use for the Holy Clavis in mind. But I was an idiot. I wasn't able to see through their schemes."

Fang:

"If the Order – no, if Bhunivelze had gotten his way, the souls of the dead would be erased, never to be reborn. Everyone would have forgotten all about "that other world", I bet."

Aoede:

"...But as it is, a lot of people – myself included – hold on to memories of "that other world" deep within our hearts. That means all of you put a stop to Bhunivelze's plans. My soul must have been saved, at that moment, by all of you."

Vanille:

"I didn't do anything. All I did was make Fang worry, and have Lightning show me the way."

Fang:

"Light saved us... all of us."

At this point, Aoede is no longer able to keep her excitement in check; she forgets she is here to hear their story, and is instead driven by thoughts of meeting Lightning.

Aoede:

"In that case, I would very much like to meet with Lightning and hear her story. My interview with Hope started me on this journey, and I've met Sazh, Snow, everyone who fought by your side, but Lightning, she's the only one I can't get in touch with. Looking back on the interviews so far, it seems to me that she, "The Saviour", is the person at the heart of everything, the one who saved "that other world".

Fang and Vanille steal a glance at each other, then give a slight nod. Aoede watches the two of them, and realizes that for two people who have lived through an immeasurable length of time together, even the briefest look is enough for them to understand each other.

Fang:

"And what are you going to do when you meet Light?"

Aoede feels the no-nonsense question like a spear jab; flustered, Aoede fails to keep her voice steady as she explains.

Aoede:

"Well, um, naturally I'd want an interview... And there's something I want her to know too, how grateful I am. Lightning was the one who saved our souls in "that other world", correct? If she saved us, I want to thank her for that."

Fang:

"Well, she already knows you're thankful – because you're here, alive."

Vanille, in a gentle, yet confident, voice, explains what Fang means.

Vanille:

"This is what Lightning wished for, from the very bottom of her heart. She wanted everyone to be able to live with their eyes on the future, without being stripped of their past. For that she battled God, and her victory won her this world – a new world for everyone to live in."

Fang:

"As long as everyone's happy living here in this world, Light's wish has already come true. No need to run after her waving your gratitude on a flag, she wouldn't want something like that, if you ask me."

Aoede:

"...In other words, you're telling me to give her some space? That I should leave Lightning alone?"

Fang:

"I'm saying that if you manage to find her on your own, well, good for you, you won't hear me complaining. You're free to look for her."

Vanille:

"What goes for you, also applies to Lightning. She's already free."

In any of her other usual interviews, Aoede would have continued pressing for information on Lightning, but with Fang and Vanille, she finds herself unwilling to upset them. The two of them sacrificed themselves to support Cocoon, where she lived, and for that she feels indebted to them. Still, Aoede isn't giving up her quest to meet Lightning; she decides it's time to return to the beginning, time to ask for the final piece of the story from the man who supported Lightning in the 13 days before the end of "that other world" – Hope Estheim.

[Jun 28, 2014 at 11:10- 126 notes](#)